

And now I shall conclude this short contribution to the history of a highly interesting bird, which has so utterly disappeared through the ruthless agency of man, by expressing the hope that we may no longer be guilty of such barbaric vandalism, and that the touching appeal written by Gould to the Australians thirty-five years ago for the preservation of the Larger Emeu may be attended to.

Royal Zoological Museum, Florence,
20th August, 1900.

II.—*On a new Species of Blue Wren from King Island,
Bass Strait.* By A. J. CAMPBELL (Melbourne).

THERE are no more popular and pleasing little birds than the beautiful Blue Wrens of Eastern Australia. The specimens of this form procured on King Island, Bass Strait, by the Expedition of the Field Naturalists' Club of Victoria (in Nov. 1887), were thought by collectors (myself included) to be *Malurus gouldi*. But I have since obtained a series of skins of Blue Wrens from Tasmania and thence to the Tropics, and find the King Island bird to be quite distinct. Its characteristics are that it is the largest of all, and that it has a decidedly darker shade of blue—brilliant ultramarine being the nearest colour. The tail is very dark blue, while there is also quite a wash of blue on the buffy-white under surface beneath the band of velvety black, and on the outer webs of the primaries. The female is similar to that of *M. cyaneus*, but much larger and slightly darker brown in colour, with a bluish tinge on the feathers of the tail.

Out of compliment to my wife, who has greatly assisted me by transcribing and correcting the draft of a work on the 'Nests and Eggs of Australian Birds,' now in the hands of a British publishing firm, I propose the name *M. elizabethæ* for this new variety; but to be known in the vernacular list as the Dark Blue Wren, in contradistinction to Dr. Sharpe's Silvery (Light) Blue Wren (*M. cyanochlamys*), the most northern form.

The greatest favourites about our camps on King Island

were the Dark Blue Wrens, because of their thrilling little songs, and more especially on account of the beauty of the males in their rich plumage of exquisite blue set in velvety black. These birds did not seem at all shy, but boldly displayed their lovely little bodies, with tail erect, on the top of any convenient bush. A nest I took in tussock-grass near our main camp on the Yellow Rock rivulet is similar to those of the other species, while the eggs are the largest of all those of the *Maluri*.

Comparative dimensions in inches of Blue Wrens (males) :

	Length.	Bill.	Wing.	Tail.	Tarsus.
<i>M. elizabethæ</i>	5·75	·33	2·1	2·35	1·0
<i>M. gouldi</i> (Sharpe)	5·0	·33	2·05	2·3	·8
<i>M. cyaneus</i> (Ellis)	5·0	·28	2·0	2·2	·8
<i>M. cyanocephalus</i> (Sharpe) . .	4·75	·3	2·0	2·05	·75

Possibly some ornithologists will be inclined to regard these four birds as referable to one species under different environments. If so, then they will have to show cause why the following should not also be united, namely:—*M. dorsalis* (Lewin) with *M. melanocephalus* (Vig. & Horsf.), *M. melanotus* (Gld.) with *M. callainus* (Gld.), and *M. lamberti* (Vig. & Horsf.) with *M. pulcherrimus* (Gld.), because in these three pairs of birds the individuals have apparently been separated one from another on the base of colouring only, the shade of colouring, however, being constant within their respective geographical areas.

While touching on geographical distribution, I may mention that the western bird, *M. pulcherrimus*, which has not been recorded further east than Central Australia, I have found more than once in the Mallee district of Victoria, where it has a black throat. This bird Gould has figured and described as having the throat and breast “intense indigo-blue,” while Dr. Sharpe in the British Museum Catalogue describes these parts as “deep black.” Should there really be a *Malurus* in South-west Australia with an indigo throat, then there is also a black-throated variety intermediate between it and *M. lamberti* on the east coast, or else, as I have endeavoured to explain, *M. pulcherrimus* and *M. lamberti* are possibly synonymous.